

Application Serial No. 10/750,598

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1-33. (canceled)

- 5 34. (new) A computer implemented method of operating a subscription manager to manage incoming machine readable messages arriving at a communications network having multiple remote user recipients, the method comprising the operations of:
- 10 examining incoming messages for prescribed attributes indicative of the messages arising due to user recipient subscription to machine-automated services of providing such messages;
- responsive to finding the prescribed attributes in a given message, the given message having at least one addressee, performing operations comprising:
- 15 determining whether the given message originated from a subscription source pre-approved by the given message's addressee for sending subscribed-to messages to the addressee;
- 20 if the given message originated from a subscription source pre-approved by the given message's addressee, forwarding the given message to the addressee;
- if the given message did not originate from a subscription source pre-approved by the given message's addressee, blocking delivery of the given message to the addressee.
- 25 35. (new) The method of claim 34, further comprising:
- responsive to absence of the prescribed attributes in a given message, forwarding the given message to its addressee regardless of whether the given message originated from a subscription source
- 30 pre-approved by the given message's addressee.

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36. (new) The method of claim 34, the operation of blocking delivery of the given message comprising at least one of the following:
- 1) refusing the given message, 2) returning the given message to its sender, 3) discarding the message, 4) prompting the given message's addressee for confirmation that the addressee requested the given message, and only upon receiving the confirmation, forwarding the given message to the addressee.
37. (new) The method of claim 34, the operation of blocking delivery of the given message further comprising:
- presenting to the given message's addressee an offer of a subscription to a machine-automated service of providing messages related to the given message, and only upon receiving acceptance of the offer, performing operations of:
- forwarding the given message to the addressee;
- precompleting a subscription activation form and providing the precompleted form to the addressee;
- responsive to the addressee's acceptance of the form, on behalf of the addressee obtaining from a source of the given message a subscription to a machine-automated service providing future messages relating to the given message.
38. (new) The method of claim 34, where:
- the subscription manager is operated by a first entity;
- the operation of blocking delivery of the given message further comprises, only if the prescribed attributes found in the given message include evidence that the given message originated from a recognized business partner of the first entity, presenting the addressee with at least one of the following user-activated options: (1) to receive the message, (2) to obtain from a source of the given message a

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subscription to a machine-automated service providing future messages relating to the given message.

39. (new) The method of claim 34, where:
5 the subscription manager is operated by a first entity;
the operation of examining incoming messages for the prescribed attributes comprising examining incoming messages for evidence that the messages originated from recognized business affiliates of the first entity.
- 10 40. (new) The method of claim 34, where:
the subscription manager is operated by a first entity;
the operations further comprise maintaining a record of machine-readable indicia provided by business affiliates of the first entity and serving
15 to uniquely identify each said business affiliate;
the finding of the prescribed attributes in a given message is satisfied by conditions including the given message including any of the identifying indicia.
- 20 41. (new) The method of claim 34, where:
the operation of forwarding the given message to the addressee further comprises: including with the forwarded given message an indication that the subscription manager has approved the forwarded given message.
- 25 42. (new) The method of claim 34, where:
the operation of, if the given message originated from a subscription source pre-approved by the given message's addressee,
forwarding the given message to the addressee further comprises:
30 determining which of the following that the given message pertains to: subscription maintenance or subscription content;

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making a different presentation of the given message to the addressee depending on whether the message pertains to subscription content or subscription maintenance.

- 5 43. (new) The method of claim 34, where the operation of, if the given message originated from a subscription source pre-approved by the given message's addressee, the operation of forwarding the given message to the addressee further comprises:
- 10 determining which of the following that the given message pertains to:
subscription maintenance or subscription content;
only if the given message pertains to subscription maintenance,
performing operations comprising:
presenting the given message's addressee with a user-activated
cancellation message;
- 15 responsive to activation of the cancellation message, the
subscription manager negotiating cancellation of the
subscription with the subscription source free of further input
by the given message's addressee.
- 20 44. (new) The method of claim 34, where the operation of, if the given message originated from a subscription source pre-approved by the given message's addressee, forwarding the given message to the addressee further comprises:
- 25 detecting whether the given message pertains to a new subscription
requiring further acts by the addressee to activate the subscription,
and if so, negotiating activation of the subscription with the
subscription source free of further input by the given message's
addressee.

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45. (new) The method of claim 34, the operation of determining whether the given message originated from a subscription source pre-approved by the given message's addressee comprising:
- 5 determining whether at least one of the following attributes of the given message matches attributes stored in a subscriptions database:
- origination address, alias origination address, proxy destination address, message subject, ID code name, other unique identifier field.
- 10 46. (new) The method of claim 34, the messages being of at least one of the following types:
- email, instant messaging, telephonic, radio, television, wireless, text, audio, visual, and combinations thereof.
- 15 47. (new) The method of claim 34, the operations further comprising:
- providing participating users with utilities for abbreviated creation, modification, and cancellation of subscription arrangements.
- 20 48. (new) An apparatus for managing incoming machine readable messages arriving at a communications network having multiple remote user recipients, comprising:
- a subscription manager programmed to perform computer-executed operations comprising:
- 25 examining incoming messages for prescribed attributes indicative of the messages arising due to user recipient subscription to machine-automated services of providing such messages;
- responsive to finding the prescribed attributes in a given message, the given message having at least one addressee,
- performing operations comprising:
- 30 determining whether the given message originated from a subscription source pre-approved by the given

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message's addressee for sending subscribed-to
messages to the addressee;

if the given message originated from a subscription source
pre-approved by the given message's addressee,
forwarding the given message to the addressee;

if the given message did not originate from a subscription
source pre-approved by the given message's
addressee, blocking delivery of the given message to
the addressee.

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49. (new) The apparatus of claim 48, the subscription manager is
programmed to perform further operations comprising:

responsive to absence of the prescribed attributes in a given message,
forwarding the given message to its addressee regardless of
whether the given message originated from a subscription source
pre-approved by the given message's addressee.

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50. (new) The apparatus of claim 48, the subscription manager is
programmed such that the operation of blocking delivery of the given message
comprises at least one of the following:

1) refusing the given message, 2) returning the given message to its
sender, 3) discarding the message, 4) prompting the given
message's addressee for confirmation that the addressee
requested the given message, and only upon receiving the
confirmation, forwarding the given message to the addressee.

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51. (new) The apparatus of claim 48, the subscription manager is
programmed such that the operation of blocking delivery of the given message
further comprises:

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presenting to the given message's addressee an offer of a subscription to
a machine-automated service of providing messages related to the

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given message, and only upon receiving acceptance of the offer,
performing operations of:
forwarding the given message to the addressee;
precompleting a subscription activation form and providing the
5 precompleted form to the addressee;
responsive to the addressee's acceptance of the form, on behalf of
the addressee obtaining from a source of the given message
a subscription to a machine-automated service providing
10 future messages relating to the given message.

52. (new) The apparatus of claim 48, where:
the subscription manager is operated by a first entity;
the subscription manager is programmed such that the operation of
15 blocking delivery of the given message further comprises, only if
the prescribed attributes found in the given message include
evidence that the given message originated from a recognized
business partner of the first entity, presenting the addressee with at
least one of the following user-activated options: (1) to receive the
20 message, (2) to obtain from a source of the given message a
subscription to a machine-automated service providing future
messages relating to the given message.

53. (new) The apparatus of claim 48, where:
the subscription manager is operated by a first entity;
25 the subscription manager is programmed such that the operation of
examining incoming messages for the prescribed attributes
comprises examining incoming messages for evidence that the
messages originated from recognized business affiliates of the first
entity.

54. (new) The apparatus of claim 48, where:

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- the subscription manager is operated by a first entity;
the apparatus further comprises a record of machine-readable indicia
provided by business affiliates of the first entity and serving to
uniquely identify each said business affiliate;
- 5 the subscription manager is programmed such that finding of the
prescribed attributes in a given message is satisfied by conditions
including the given message including any of the identifying indicia
from the record.
- 10 55. (new) The apparatus of claim 48, where:
the subscription manager is programmed such that the operation of
forwarding the given message to the addressee further comprises:
including with the forwarded given message an indication that the
subscription manager has approved the forwarded given message.
- 15 56. (new) The apparatus of claim 48, where:
the subscription manager is programmed such that the operation of, if the
given message originated from a subscription source pre-approved
by the given message's addressee, forwarding the given message
to the addressee further comprises:
20 determining which of the following that the given message pertains
to: subscription maintenance or subscription content;
making a different presentation of the given message to the
addressee depending on whether the message pertains to
25 subscription content or subscription maintenance.
57. (new) The apparatus of claim 48, where the subscription manager is
programmed such that the operation of, if the given message originated from a
subscription source pre-approved by the given message's addressee, the
30 operation of forwarding the given message to the addressee further comprises:

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determining which of the following that the given message pertains to:
subscription maintenance or subscription content;
only if the given message pertains to subscription maintenance,
performing operations comprising:
5 presenting the given message's addressee with a user-activated
cancellation message;
responsive to activation of the cancellation message, the
subscription manager negotiating cancellation of the
subscription with the subscription source free of further input
10 by the given message's addressee.

58. (new) The apparatus of claim 48, where the subscription manager is
programmed such that the operation of, if the given message originated from a
subscription source pre-approved by the given message's addressee, forwarding
15 the given message to the addressee further comprises:
detecting whether the given message pertains to a new subscription
requiring further acts by the addressee to activate the subscription,
and if so, negotiating activation of the subscription with the
subscription source free of further input by the given message's
20 addressee.

59. (new) The apparatus of claim 48, where:
the apparatus further comprises a subscriptions database;
the subscription manager is programmed such that the operation of
25 determining whether the given message originated from a
subscription source pre-approved by the given message's
addressee comprises:
determining whether at least one of the following attributes of the
given message matches attributes stored in the
30 subscriptions database: origination address, alias

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origination address, proxy destination address, message
subject, ID code name, other unique identifier field.

60. (new) The apparatus of claim 48, the messages being of at least one of
5 the following types:

email, instant messaging, telephonic, radio, television, wireless, text,
audio, visual, and combinations thereof.

61. (new) The apparatus of claim 48, the subscription manager is
10 programmed to perform further operations comprising:

providing participating users with utilities for abbreviated creation,
modification, and cancellation of subscription arrangements.

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